

The site was visited by OAU at the request of EW Beard.

The second underpin of the N chancel wall was shuttered for concreting and no recording was possible. However Mr C Tombs of EW Beard noted that in both the first underpins, ie N and S sides, they had seen a footing returning under the chancel, which they took to be the E end of a shorter chancel (marked on OAU base plan as described).

The second underpin of the S chancel wall was in process of being dug. The footing was of loose clunch rubble as elsewhere, with rubblework in reddish-buff mortar on top forming an offset. Down the middle of the lower footing was a tooled face of clunch blocks, facing S, set 0.25 m behind the face of the existing wall (section 4). The stones were set on edge, and gave the impression of being the N lining of a clunch tomb predating the chancel extension. The builders would check for a return when they took out the next underpin.

The S side of the nave was apparently the subject of interest by the architect, engineer and English Heritage. The footing showed a substantial offset which differed from elsewhere around the church in being largely of sarsen (as opposed to clunch). This offset seemed to curve out at the vestry end, although the footing of the vestry was of clunch. At the W end there were no sarsens close to the quoin, and here the core of the wall seemed to be of clunch. The sarsens were laid unevenly, and in places the lower course formed a second offset. There were no sarsens in the W end footing, where the only visible footing was of clunch, continuous with the tower footing.

Interpretation

Because of the difficulties in interpreting the development of the church from this information, some observations were made on the construction of the S side of the nave, especially because there is some structural weakness at the SW corner. My feeling was that coursing of the outside face was regular, and was consistent with the quoining and with the ashlar of the blocked S doorway. Beneath two courses of ashlar was a broad band of small sarsens, which also appears at the lowest level of many of the walls of the church. It is possible that this was added later to counter the effects of weather on clunch near the ground. Such an explanation would be supported by the treatment of the lower parts of the walls of the tower and the N side of the nave, where a battered plinth has been created with three courses of ashlar. There may be places where this can be shown to cover Victorian brick repairs, though I did not note this.

Conclusions

The church has a surprising variety of foundation types, which make it difficult to evaluate the significance of the sarsen footing of the nave S wall. It could be the nave of a previous shorter church, but such a conclusion will be affected by whether

the sarsen courses extend through the thickness of the wall, and if not, whether the mortar in which they are set extends through the thickness. In this question the new section of the chancel wall (sect 4) could not help because it is evidently an extension. Assuming that the seriously bulged internal skin of the W end wall is to be rectified, there may be some engineering reason to investigate the footings here. If excavation here is to affect the sarsen footing it may answer the above questions, and may show a return footing for an earlier W end.

For the above-ground structure I saw no convincing evidence for any extensive rebuild, but if this point is significant I would review my opinion when the exterior paint has been stripped, at which time there may be a case for a survey of the exterior stonework affected.

Recommendations

- 1 Any further investigation of the footings of the SW corner of the nave to be under archaeological supervision.
- 2 Any doubts about the intergity of the external stonework in this area (following paint stripping) to be resolved by an archaeological survey.

BD